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ABSTRACT

This document is a chapter in "The Principles and Practice of Educational Management," which aims to provide a systematic and analytical introduction to the study of educational management. The structure of the book reflects the main substantive areas of educational leadership and management, and most of the major themes are covered in the volume's 19 chapters, of which this is one. This chapter provides an overview of organizational and management theory, illustrating its relevance to contemporary practice. Theory is important because it provides the framework for managerial decisions. Practitioners may discount theory as little more than common sense, but this view is often based on assumptions regarding good practices. Examination of these "common sense" assumptions can provide a more informed context for making good decisions. There is no single theory of educational management because of the range of perspectives in the field. The various perspectives can be represented by six distinct theories of educational management: Bureaucracy, the preferred model in many countries, which focuses on hierarchical authority, goal orientation, and division of labor; Collegiality, which provides for the participation of teachers; Micropolitics, which addresses the political activity that takes place inside schools or colleges; Subjective Theories, which focus on individuals within organizations; Ambiguity Theories, which stress uncertainty and unpredictability in organizations; and Organizational Culture, which emphasizes the informal aspects of organizations rather than their official elements. The ultimate goal for any theory is to improve practice. Since all practice arises from some type of theory, theory can provide managers a framework to help them understand the meaning of events. (Contains 54 references.) (RJM)

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Educational Management: Theory and Practice.

Tony Bush

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Educational Management: Theory and Practice

Tony Bush

Introduction: theory and practice

Theory is an unfashionable notion in education, particularly in England and Wales. It is regarded by some politicians and administrators as irrelevant to the practice of teaching and management in schools. The shift of teacher education from a predominantly university-based activity to a prescribed training programme largely taking place in schools has been accompanied by a cacophony of dismissive comments about the alleged over-theoretical bias of university education departments. Similarly, the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) in England and Wales has been developed by practitioners and is atheoretical (Fidler, 1998). Ouston (1998: 319) criticises this approach and argues for 'inclusion of some aspects of organisational theory . . . [to] provide a framework for professional reflection and for the development of personal practice and understanding'.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of organisational and management theory and, more ambitiously, to demonstrate its relevance to contemporary practice.

Why is theory important?

Theory and practice are often regarded as separate aspects of educational management. Academics develop and refine theory while teachers and managers engage in practice. Theory may be perceived as esoteric and remote from practice and this may be its greatest weakness. The acid test of theory in an applied discipline such as educational management is its relevance to practice:

> Theories are most useful for influencing practice when they suggest new ways in which events and situations can be perceived. Fresh insight may be provided by focusing attention on possible interrelationships that the practitioner has failed to notice, and which can be further explored and tested through empirical research . . . Theory cannot then be dismissed as irrelevant. (Hughes and Bush, 1991: 234)

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Theory provides the framework for managerial decisions. What practitioners may regard as 'just common sense' is often based on their assumptions about good practice. Such 'implicit theories' often provide the rationale for decision-making. However, managerial effectiveness is likely to be 'enhanced by an *explicit* awareness of the theoretical framework underpinning practice in educational institutions' (Bush, 1995: 18).

There are three main arguments supporting the view that managers have much to learn from an appreciation of theory, providing that it is grounded firmly (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) in the realities of practice:

- Reliance on facts as the sole guide to action is unsatisfactory because all evidence requires *interpretation*. Theory provides the framework for interpreting events. It provides 'mental models' (Leithwood et al., 1999: 75) to help in understanding the nature and effects of practice.
- Dependence on personal *experience* in interpreting facts and making decisions is narrow because it discards the knowledge of others. Grounded theory emerges by assessing a wide range of practice and developing models which seem to help in explaining events and behaviour. Theory also helps by reducing the likelihood of mistakes occurring while experience is being acquired.
- Experience is likely to prove particularly unhelpful when the practitioner begins to operate in a different *context*. Practice in one institution may have little relevance in the new environment. Awareness and understanding of organisational culture, for example, are likely to be valuable in interpreting events in the new context.

Explicit attention to theory is likely to be valuable for postgraduate students who need to plan their research, or interpret their findings, using an appropriate conceptual framework.

What do we mean by 'theory' in educational management?

There is no single all-embracing theory of educational management. This is because it comprises a series of perspectives rather than an all-embracing 'scientific' truth. The existence of several different, and competing, perspectives, creates what Bolman and Deal (1984) describe as 'conceptual pluralism'. Most theories have something to offer but each tends to provide only a partial explanation of educational management practice:

> Theories and explanations of organisational life are based on metaphors that lead us to see and understand organisations in distinctive yet partial ways . . . the use of metaphor provides a way of thinking and a way of seeing that pervades how we understand our world . . . metaphor . . . always produces this kind of

> one-sided insight. In highlighting certain interpretations it tends to force others into a background role. (Morgan, 1986: 12–13)

Many different perspectives drawn from organisation and management theory appear in the diverse and expanding body of literature on educational leadership and management. These perspectives may be presented as six distinct theories of educational management (Bush, 1995). We turn now to examine these six theories.

Bureaucracy

The concept of bureaucracy is associated with the work of the German sociologist Max Weber. It has become the most powerful and pervasive theory of educational management and is the preferred model in many countries, including the Czech Republic (Svecova, 2000), China (Bush et al., 1998), Greece (Bush, 2001; Persianis, 1998), Israel (Gaziel, 1998), Poland (Klus-Stanska and Olek, 1998), South Africa (Sebakwane, 1997), Slovenia (Becaj, 1994) and much of South America (Newland, 1995).

> The purely bureaucratic type of administrative organisation . . . is, from a technical point of view, capable of attaining the highest degree of efficiency and is in this sense formally the most rational means of carrying out imperative control over human beings. It is superior to any other form in precision, in stability, in the stringency of its discipline, and in its reliability. (Weber, 1989: 16)

This positive assessment contradicts the widely held 'common sense' view that bureaucracy is associated with inefficiency and excessive centralisation.

Main features of bureaucracy

- There is a *hierarchical authority structure* which is often vertical with staff being accountable to their superordinate in the hierarchy. In schools, teachers are accountable to the principal, often through a middle manager such as a head of department. The 'ethos of top-down management' (Johnson, 1995: 224) is evident in South African schools: 'It [is] important to bear in mind the nature of power relations within the schools. In most cases power resides with the principal who has legal authority and is legally accountable' (Johnson, 1995: 225).
- Schools and colleges are *goal oriented*. Staff are expected to work towards achieving those aims set by school leaders.
- There is a *division of labour* with staff specialising on the basis of expertise. This is evident in the departmental structure of secondary schools and colleges and in primary schools in many countries, including Hong Kong and Singapore. This aspect of bureaucracy does not apply to British primary schools which usually operate with a class teacher model.

- Decisions and behaviour are governed by *rules and regulations* rather than personal initiative. Schools usually have rules for children's behaviour and handbooks to guide the behaviour of staff. These rules may extend to the central issues of curriculum and pedagogy. In South Africa, 'the teachers . . . were . . . subjected to tight bureaucratic regulation, especially in the matter of the curriculum' (Sebakwane, 1997: 397). In Greece, bureaucratic control extends to prescribing the textbooks to be used by teachers (Bush, 2001).

  The threat to professionalism implicit in these examples is one of the most powerful criticisms of bureaucracy. When curricula are tightly defined, teachers have limited scope to use their professional judgement to tailor provision to the specific needs of the pupils in their class. This criticism may also apply to the National Curriculum in England and Wales and to the government's literacy and numeracy strategies.
- Decisions are made through a *rational process* (see below).
- Leaders are *accountable* to external bodies for the operation of their schools (see below).

Rational decision-making

In bureaucratic models, it is assumed that decisions are made through a rational process involving a clear and logical relationship between problems and solutions. The process of rational decision-making is thought to have the following sequence:

1 Perception of a problem or a choice opportunity.
2 Analysis of the problem, including data collection.
3 Formulation of alternative solutions or choices.
4 Choice of the most appropriate solution to meet the goals of the organisation.
5 Implementation of the chosen alternative.
6 Monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of the chosen strategy (Bush, 1995: 38).

The process is essentially iterative in that the evaluation may lead to a redefinition of the problem or a search for an alternative solution (see Figure 2.1).

The introduction of self-management in many countries has been accompanied by an explicit assumption that school management operates within a rational framework. Levačić (1995: 61), referring to local management of schools in England and Wales, describes rational management processes as 'the official leitmotif of local management'. She discusses the prescribed model in language remarkably similar to the process described above:

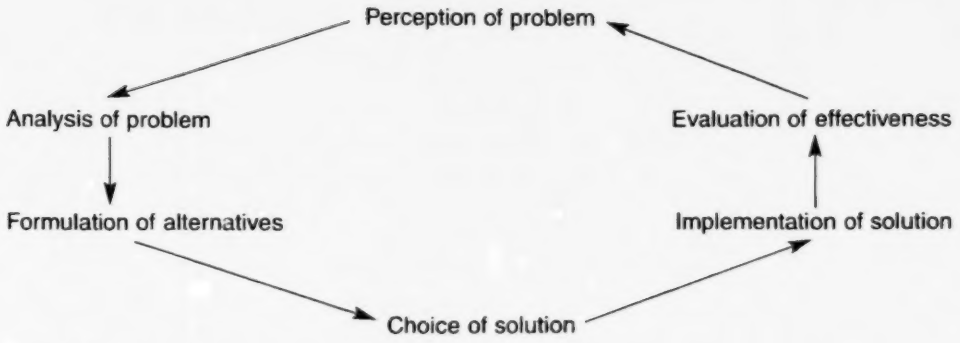

Figure 2.1 The rational process
(Bush, 1995:39)

> The model of good management practice . . . is essentially a rational one. It advocates a system for allocating resources which is directed at the explicit achievement of institutional objectives. This requires clarity in the specification of objectives, gathering and analysing information on alternative ways of attaining the objectives, evaluating the alternatives and selecting those actions judged most likely to maximise achievement of the objectives. (Levačić, 1995: 62)

Similar considerations underpin the management of post-incorporation further education colleges in England and Wales. Management is assumed to be 'rooted in a rational-scientific model that proposes the creation of a SMP [strategic management process] that is sequential, linear and controllable (Watson and Crossley, 2001: 114).

The rational model places a strong emphasis on 'value for money'. Inspectors appointed by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) are required to make a specific judgement on this criterion when reporting on their findings in English and Welsh schools.

In practice, rational approaches may be difficult to sustain, particularly in periods of rapid and multiple change, as we shall discuss later in this chapter.

Bureaucracy and public accountability

The hierarchical dimension of bureaucracy applies to the school's external links as well as to internal relationships between staff. Principals are accountable to their external superordinate for the operation of their school. In most cases, this responsibility is to a senior official in local, regional or national government. This person has a legitimate right to hold the principal to account for events at the school (Kogan, 1986).

A significant aspect of bureaucracy is that accountability to officials is regarded as more important than responsibility to clients such as students or parents. This is powerfully illustrated in Becaj's (1994) discussion of Slovenia:

> Heads know that parents and children are important but in fact they have been used to accepting the superior institutions and authorities as the real and powerful 'customers' on which they are really dependent. At the same time, parents and children have been used to see the school and its teachers as authorities who should be obeyed . . . This kind of relationship between heads and parents also suits and supports bureaucratic organisation and head centred leadership very well. (Becaj, 1994: 11)

Public accountability is the most obvious external manifestation of a bureaucratic education system.

Collegiality

Collegiality is an attractive model for educational organisations because it provides for the participation of teachers, in particular, in those decisions which affect their working lives. The assumption is that schools and colleges determine policies and make decisions through a process of discussion leading to consensus. Power is shared amongst some or all of the members of the organisation who are thought to have a mutual understanding about the aims of the school (Bush, 1995).

There are three main arguments in favour of a collegial approach to management:

- There is ample evidence that teachers wish to be involved in decision-making. For example, several projects in South Africa (Poo and Hoyle, 1995; Steyn and Squelch, 1997) show that teachers want greater participation.
- The quality of decision-making may be better when educators participate in the process. Staff involvement increases the quantum of expertise brought to bear on problems although the time spent in meetings may elongate the decision process and frustrate participants (Bush, 1995).
- Effective implementation of decisions is more likely if teachers 'own' the outcomes through their participation. Poo and Hoyle's (1995: 86) research in South Africa shows that 'collective responsibility for decision-making would make teachers more keen to see that decisions are carried out'.

Main features of collegiality

- Collegiality assumes an *authority of expertise* in contrast to the positional authority associated with bureaucracy. Teachers have specific expertise as subject specialists as well as general competence as education professionals.
- Teachers have a *common set of values* emanating from the socialisation which occurs during training and professional practice. These common values are thought to lead to shared aims.

- Decisions are reached through a process of discussion leading to *consensus*. The belief that there are common values and shared aims leads to a view that it is both desirable and feasible to resolve issues by agreement.

Collegiality in practice

Collegiality has been strongly advocated in England and Wales and has become closely associated with school improvement (Campbell and Southworth, 1993). In practice, only a modified version of collegiality has operated, as we shall see later.

Collegiality is a Western concept and is thought to have emanated from the colleges of Oxford and Cambridge universities. However, a similar notion, the 'jiaoyanzu', operates in Chinese schools (Bush et al., 1998; Paine and Ma, 1993). Paine and Ma (1993) refer to the 'assumption that teachers would work together in virtually every aspect of their work' and explain how the jiaoyanzu operate: 'Many decisions about curriculum and instruction are made jointly through the jiaoyanzu . . . teachers have a structured time to work together . . . teachers work together . . . in an office that belongs to their jiaoyanzu' (Paine and Ma, 1993: 679).

A remarkable example of extended collegiality occurs in Spain where head-teachers are effectively appointed by the teachers and other stakeholders. From 1985 until 1995, the head was elected by the School Council from the ranks of ordinary teachers and served for a three-year period. The School Council comprises teachers and representatives of other stakeholders, including parents. The process was modified in 1995 to allow only teachers accredited by the Administration to be elected, and to extend the period of headship to five years (Ruiz Vera, 1997). However, this arrangement remains significant because it seems evident that the head's primary accountability must be to the appointing body, including the teachers, rather than to the administrative apparatus.

Contrived or controlled collegiality

Collegiality is an attractive notion because it provides for the involvement of teachers in decisions which affect their professional lives. However, it has several limitations, notably in the time often taken to make decisions and in the optimistic assumption that outcomes will be determined by consensus rather than conflict. It also depends on the willingness of both heads and teachers to make it work. Heads may prefer to rely on their own professional judgement while teachers may not wish to commit the time required to participate in the meetings required to implement collegiality.

Hargreaves (1994) makes a more fundamental criticism, arguing that collegiality is being espoused or 'contrived' by official groups in order to secure the

implementation of national or school policy. Contrived collegiality has the following features:

- administratively regulated rather than spontaneous
- compulsory rather than discretionary
- geared to the implementation of the mandates of government or principal
- fixed in time and place
- designed to have predictable outcomes (Hargreaves, 1994: 195–6).

The literacy and numeracy hours in England and Wales illustrate contrived collegiality. Teachers are expected to discuss *how* to implement these initiatives, which prescribe pedagogy as well as curriculum content, but not *whether* to do so. Brundrett (1998: 313) argues that collegiality may be just another vehicle for control, 'the handmaiden of an . . . increasingly centralised bureaucracy'.

Micropolitics

The concept of micropolitics refers to political activity which takes place inside schools or colleges. It may be contrasted with macropolitics which relate to debate and disagreement within the wider policy-making process. A micropolitical approach assumes that policy and decisions emerge through a process of negotiation and bargaining. Interest groups develop and form alliances in pursuit of particular policy aims. Conflict is viewed as a natural phenomenon and power accrues to dominant coalitions rather than being the preserve of formal leaders (Bush, 1995).

Main features of micropolitics

- The focus is on *group activity* rather than the whole institution. In education, the main unit of analysis is the department and its sectional approach to decision-making.
- Micropolitics are concerned with *interests* and *interest groups*. Individuals have a variety of interests which they pursue within the organisation. Individual interests may lead to collaboration and the formation of interest groups, which may be temporary or enduring.
- Micropolitics stress the prevalence of *conflict* in organisations. Individuals and interest groups pursue their different aims, leading to conflict between them. 'I take schools . . . to be riven with actual or potential conflict between members; to be poorly co-ordinated, to be ideologically diverse . . . if we are to understand the nature of schools as organisations, we must achieve some understanding of these conflicts (Ball, 1987: 19). Bishop and Mulford (1999: 179) refer to teacher resistance to externally imposed change in Victoria, Australia, as a manifestation of conflict in schools.

- Decisions emerge after a complex process of *bargaining* and *negotiation*. Interests are promoted in committees, and during informal meetings, and differences may be resolved only after a long and multi-stage process.
- The concept of *power* is central to micropolitics. The decision-making process is likely to be resolved according to the relative power of the participants. 'Divergent interests give rise to conflicts, visible and invisible, that are resolved or perpetuated by various kinds of power play' (Morgan, 1986: 148).

Micropolitics and resource allocation

The concept of micropolitics has been applied to the process of resource allocation by several authors (Bush, 2000; Levačić, 1995; Simkins, 1998). 'Resource management is . . . a micropolitical process, providing an arena within which participants compete for . . . resources' (Simkins, 1998: 71). As with other aspects of decision-making, the budgetary process is likely to be resolved by the relative power of the participants.

The main resource allocation approach likely to involve micropolitical activity is a bidding system. Bidding involves individuals or groups applying for resources, usually against set criteria. This is a political exercise because applicants have to decide whether, and how much, to inflate bids: 'This approach encourages departments to inflate their estimates . . . it tends to undervalue the modest and realistic departments against the pushy and wily ones; and it still leaves unsolved the problem of the final decision' (Knight, 1983: 118).

The main merit of a micropolitical approach to resource allocation is that it is likely to satisfy a higher proportion of participants than many other methods, notably the zero-based approach (Bush, 2000), which is designed to change the status quo and is bound to offend certain interest groups.

School governing bodies and micropolitics

School governing bodies provide a significant example of micropolitical activity in education because they arise from the interaction of officially sanctioned interest groups. Forums designed to constitute the framework for community participation and local democracy also provide the platform for conflict between different representative groups. Governing bodies may then become political arenas where competing interests jostle for supremacy. The most dramatic example in England occurred at Stratford school in East London. There was a series of disputes between the head and the governing body over staff appointments, community use of premises and the conduct of assemblies. The head was suspended by the governing body and only reinstated following a series of court actions and after parent governor elections altered the balance of power (Bush et al., 1993; Snelling, 2001).

The new governing bodies in post-apartheid South Africa also provide evidence of micropolitical activity. Political actions during the years of struggle have continued in certain governing bodies. South Africa is unusual in including learners as members of governing bodies but Phakoa and Bisschoff (2001) show that they are frustrated because they cannot vote on financial matters and because they disagree with the provision for parents to constitute a majority on governing bodies. Many learners are much older than in other countries, because their education was interrupted during the struggle, and they resent being treated as minors.

All forums set up to facilitate participation, including governing bodies, are likely to become micropolitical arenas, at certain times and for particular decisions. They provide a legitimate opportunity to promote interests and also offer the prospect of regulating and resolving conflict between groups.

Subjective theories

Subjective theories focus on individuals within organisations. Each person is assumed to have a unique and subjective perception of the organisation with events having different meanings for each participant. Organisations are portrayed as the manifestations of the values and beliefs of individuals, rather than the concrete realities of bureaucracy.

Subjective theories became prominent as a result of the work of Greenfield (1973) who was very critical of conventional (largely bureaucratic) theory:

> Most theories of organisation grossly simplify the nature of the reality with which they deal. The drive to see the organisation as a single kind of entity with a life of its own apart from the perceptions and beliefs of those involved in it blinds us to its complexity and the variety of organisations people create around themselves. (Greenfield, 1973: 571)

Main features of subjective theories

- They focus on the beliefs and perceptions of *individual* members of organisations. In schools and colleges, individual teachers, support staff and pupils have different values and aspirations according to their own background and motivation. The school is not the same reality for all its participants.
- They are concerned with the *meanings* placed on events by individual participants. The focus is on individual interpretation of behaviour rather than the situations and actions themselves.
- They treat *structure* as essentially a product of human interaction rather than being predetermined or fixed.
- They emphasise the significance of *individual purposes* and deny the existence of organisational aims. 'What is an organisation that it can have such a thing as a goal?' (Greenfield, 1973: 553).

Subjective theories and qualitative research

Subjective theories relate to a mode of research which is predominantly interpretive or qualitative. This approach to enquiry is based on the subjective experience of individuals. The main aim is to seek understanding of the ways in which individuals create, modify and interpret the social world which they inhabit. It is concerned with meanings as much as with facts and this is one of the major differences between qualitative and quantitative research. The link between qualitative research and subjective theories is evident in Cohen and Manion's (1994) definition: '[Qualitative research] stresses the importance of the subjective experience of individuals in the creation of the social world . . . The principal concern is with an understanding of the way in which he or she finds himself or herself . . . The approach now takes on a qualitative . . . aspect' (Cohen and Manion, 1994: 8).

Just as researchers seek the individual perceptions of participants, notably in using unstructured and semi-structured interviews, managers have to be aware of the individual needs of their colleagues. A recognition of the different values and motivations of the people who work in organisations, 'what makes them tick', is an essential element if they are to be led and managed effectively.

Ambiguity theories

Ambiguity theories stress uncertainty and unpredictability in organisations. The emphasis is on the instability and complexity of institutional life. These approaches assume that organisational aims are problematic and that institutions experience difficulty in ordering their priorities. March (1982) explains that ambiguity theories were developed to provide a better way of explaining the nature of complex organisations:

> Theories of choice underestimate the confusion and complexity surrounding actual decision making. Many things are happening at once; technologies are changing and poorly understood; alliances, preferences and perceptions are changing; problems, solutions, opportunities, ideas, people and outcomes are mixed together in a way that makes their interpretation uncertain and their connections unclear. (March, 1982: 36)

Main features of ambiguity theories

- There is a lack of clarity about the *aims* of the organisation. 'It may not be at all clear what the goals of the school are. Different members of the school may perceive different goals or attribute different priorities to the same goals, or even be unable to define goals which have any operational meaning' (Bell, 1989: 134).

- Organisations are characterised by *fragmentation* and *loose coupling* (Weick, 1976). Schools are divided into groups which have an internal coherence based on common values and goals. Links between groups are more tenuous and unpredictable.
- *Organisational structure* is regarded as problematic. There is uncertainty over the relative power of the different parts of institution. Committees have rights and responsibilities which overlap with each other and with the authority assigned to individual managers. The more complex the structure, the greater the potential for ambiguity. Noble and Pym's (1989: 33) classic study of 'the receding locus of power' shows how difficult it can be to establish which body is responsible for decision-making. 'There was a widespread feeling of powerlessness, a feeling that decisions were really taken elsewhere'.
- There is *fluid participation* as members move in and out of decision-making situations. 'The participants . . . vary among themselves in the amount of time they devote to the organisation; individual participants vary from one time to another' (Cohen and March, 1986: 114). An interesting example of *fluid participation* was noted by Yancey (2000: 64) in respect of parental involvement in Charter schools in California: 'The parent group was never particularly cohesive, even from the beginning. Parents would come to a flurry of meetings, disappear for a month or so and then reappear . . . people would pull in and out all the time'.

Rational and irrational decision-making

We noted earlier in this chapter that bureaucracy assumes a rational decision-making process. Ambiguity theory challenges this assumption and claims that the absence of clear goals makes it problematic to link decisions to institutional aims. This argument is illustrated in respect of budgeting by Levačić (1995) and Bush (2000). Because purposes are unclear, it is difficult to link budgeting to aims and the notion of an optimum choice is also contentious. Budgetary decisions are likely to be characterised by a lack of clarity.

> The rational model is undermined by ambiguity, since it is so heavily dependent on the availability of information about relationships between inputs and outputs – between means and ends. If ambiguity prevails, then it is not possible for organisations to have clear aims and objectives . . . This state of affairs would explain why decision-making, particularly in the public sector, does not in fact follow the rational model, but is characterised by incrementalism. (Levačić, 1995: 82)

In practice, educational organisations tend to operate with a mix of rational and irrational processes. The ambiguity tends to increase at times of external turbulence and this makes it more difficult to adhere to rational approaches. 'Rationalistic approaches will always be blown off course by the contingent, the unexpected and the irrational' (Hoyle, 1986: 72).

Organisational culture

Culture has become increasingly important as a way of describing and understanding social and educational issues. The concept of *societal* culture is examined by Dimmock and Walker in Chapter 5 of this volume. The purpose of this section is to assess the significance of *organisational* culture for schools and colleges. Culture may be regarded as one of several alternative means of conceptualising organisations, or as a holistic way of understanding them. This chapter adopts the first approach, consistent with the notion of 'conceptual pluralism' noted earlier.

The concept of organisational culture emphasises the informal aspects of organisations rather than their official elements. It focuses on the values, beliefs and norms of people in the organisation and on how these individual perceptions coalesce into shared organisational meanings. 'An increasing number of writers . . . have adopted the term "culture" to define that social and phenomenological uniqueness of a particular organisational community' (Beare et al., 1989: 173).

Main features of organisational culture

- The central focus is on the *values* and *beliefs* of members of organisations. These values underpin the behaviour and attitudes of individuals within schools and colleges, but they may not always be explicit. 'Many beliefs are indeed so deeply buried that individuals do not even know what they are' (Nias et al., 1989: 11).
- There is an assumption that individual values will coalesce and lead to *shared norms and meanings* which gradually become cultural features of the school or college, 'the way we do things around here'. Alternatively, and particularly in larger schools and colleges, several sub-cultures may develop, reflecting the different value systems of departments and other sub-units.
- Culture is typically expressed through *rituals* and *ceremonies* which are used to support and celebrate beliefs and norms. Educational organisations are rich in such symbols as assemblies, prize-givings, religious occasions and graduation ceremonies.
- Culture assumes the existence of *heroes* and *heroines* who embody the values and beliefs of the organisation. These heroes might be successful in sport, music, drama, business or politics but they bring credit on the organisation through their achievements. Schools are likely to give prominence to those people whose triumphs match the aspirations of the school. The importance of sport in South Africa is reflected in schools' choice of heroes. One Durban school visited by the author in 2001, for example, had chosen South Africa's cricket captain, Shaun Pollock, a former student, to open its newest building.

Managing organisational culture

Effective leadership is increasingly linked to the generation or adaptation of culture (Bush, 1998). One way of generating culture is to focus on the aims of the school or college. The statement of aims, and their espousal in action, serve to reinforce the values and beliefs of the organisation. Clearly articulated aims should help in creating a strong culture. However, this may be problematic if leaders are seeking to generate a culture at odds with the prevailing norms. Turner (1990: 11), for example, doubts that 'something as powerful as culture can be much affected by the puny efforts of top managers'.

A dramatic example of the difficulty of disturbing an entrenched culture is provided by the continuing lack of a culture of teaching and learning in the new South Africa. The years of struggle against apartheid inevitably affected schools, particularly those in townships. Both students and teachers used to 'strike' and demonstrate against the policies of the white government. A culture of teaching and learning was difficult to sustain in such a hostile climate. The shift to majority government has produced only limited and patchy improvement in this situation. 'The crisis in black education, including what has come to be referred to as the "breakdown" in the "culture of learning", . . . continues unabated' (Badat, 1995: 143).

South African principals surveyed by the author (Bush and Anderson, forthcoming) are adopting four overlapping strategies to address this problem:

- instilling in the minds of learners that 'education is their future'
- showing the importance of education within and outside the school
- providing a conducive educational environment
- developing a culture of learning.

Despite these strategies, however, it seems likely that the development of a genuine culture of learning will be slow and dependent on the quality of leadership in individual schools (Bush and Anderson, forthcoming).

Understanding organisational culture is an important aspect of leadership in schools and colleges. Externally imposed innovation often fails because it is out of tune with the values of the teachers who have to implement it. 'Since organisation ultimately resides in the heads of the people involved, effective organisational change implies cultural change' (Morgan, 1986: 138).

Conclusion: applying theory to practice

Conceptual pluralism

Bolman and Deal's (1984) notion of 'conceptual pluralism', discussed earlier, offers a framework for the analysis of educational management theory. The six theories discussed in this chapter each provide important insights into school

and college management but they are all uni-dimensional. Individually, they are partial and selective but taken together they represent a powerful means of analysing and explaining events and behaviour in education: 'Managers . . . can increase their effectiveness and their freedom through the use of multiple vantage points. To be locked into a single path is likely to produce error and self-imprisonment' (Bolman and Deal, 1984: 4).

Theory and national culture

The concept of national or societal culture, discussed in Chapter 5, provides one way of understanding the relevance of theories in different contexts. The values and beliefs of leaders and managers have been moulded by their cultural backgrounds and this makes them more comfortable with certain approaches than with other theories. The norms and expectations of society predispose managers to operate within a particular conceptual framework.

Managers in China, and other predominantly Chinese societies, tend to operate within the bureaucratic framework. The notion of 'adoring authority' is one of the main aspects of traditional authority in China (Bush and Qiang, 2000). Just as children are required to comply with the requirements of adults without question, so teachers are expected to follow the policies of principals, who hold positional authority within an essentially bureaucratic system. It is not culturally acceptable for teachers to question school leaders who expect and receive compliance with their decisions. Even the jiaoyanzu, which provides the potential for collegiality as we noted earlier, is subject to the overall responsibility of the teaching dean, a senior manager within the school's hierarchy (Bush et al., 1998).

In post-apartheid South Africa, a commitment to democratic values means that notions of collegiality are beginning to permeate a previously bureaucratic model of management. The principle of democratic governance is expected to influence all levels of society and is reflected in both increased teacher empowerment and the involvement of all stakeholders in school policy-making, notably through the governing bodies. The recent history of South Africa means that 'the notion of participation is currently in vogue' (Sayed and Carrim, 1997: 94).

Using theory to improve practice

The ultimate test of theory is whether it improves practice and the *potential* for it to do so is clear. Managers generally engage in a process of implicit theorising in deciding how to formulate policy or respond to developments. 'Practice is never theory-free, for it is always guided by an image of what one is trying to do. The real issue is whether or not we are aware of the theory guiding our action' (Morgan, 1986: 336). Theory provides the explanatory framework which helps managers to ascertain the real meaning of events.

Explicit use of theory helps in two specific ways:

- *diagnosis*: assessing the situation and highlighting the main issues to be addressed
- *evaluation*: determining the most appropriate response to the problem.

These skills are consistent with the concept of the 'reflective practitioner', whose managerial approach incorporates both learning from experience and a distillation of theory based on wide reading and engagement with academics and practitioners. This might also involve small-scale research to establish the relevance of theory in the leader's professional context. A combination of theory and experience is likely to lead to more effective practitioners than relying on experience alone.

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